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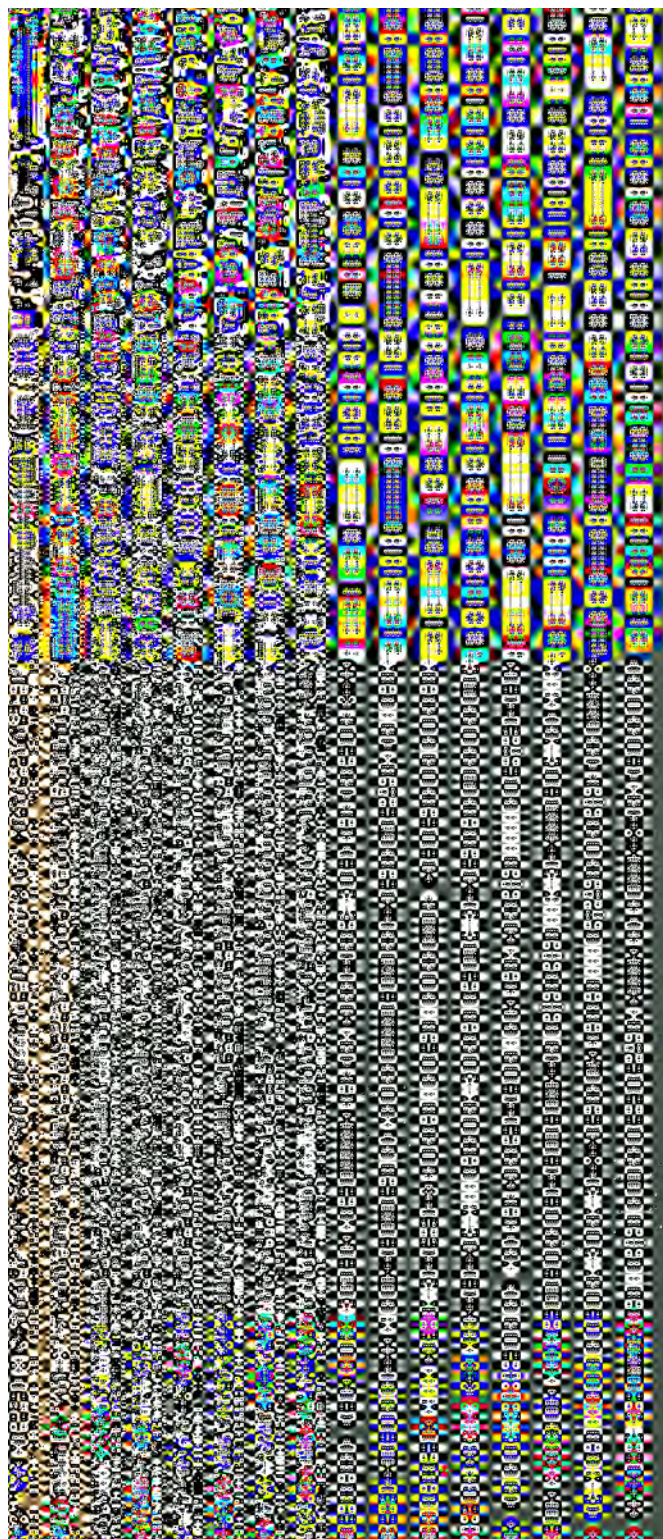
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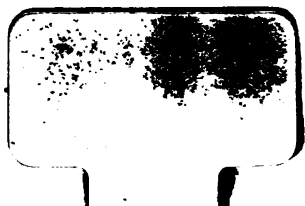
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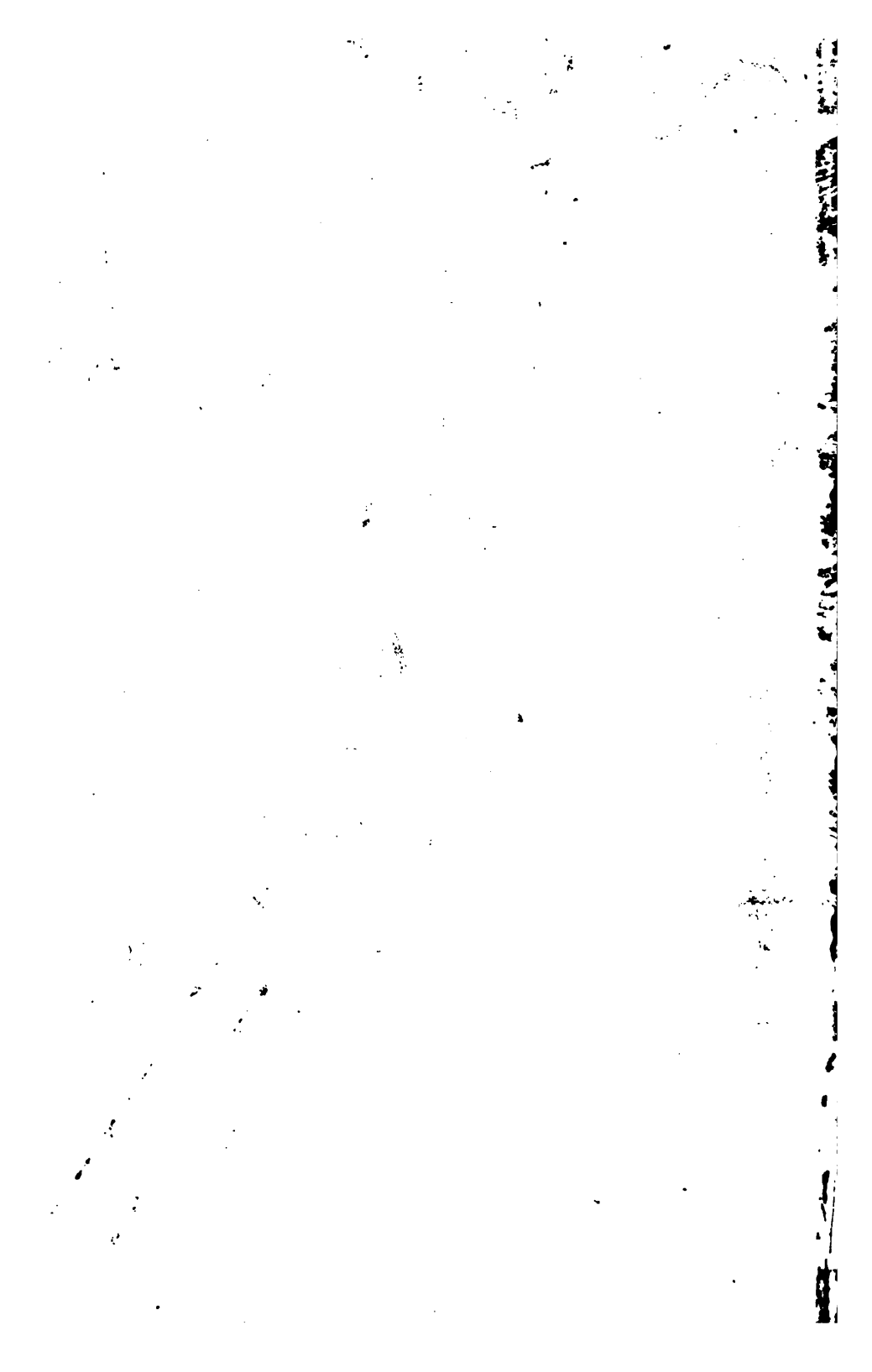
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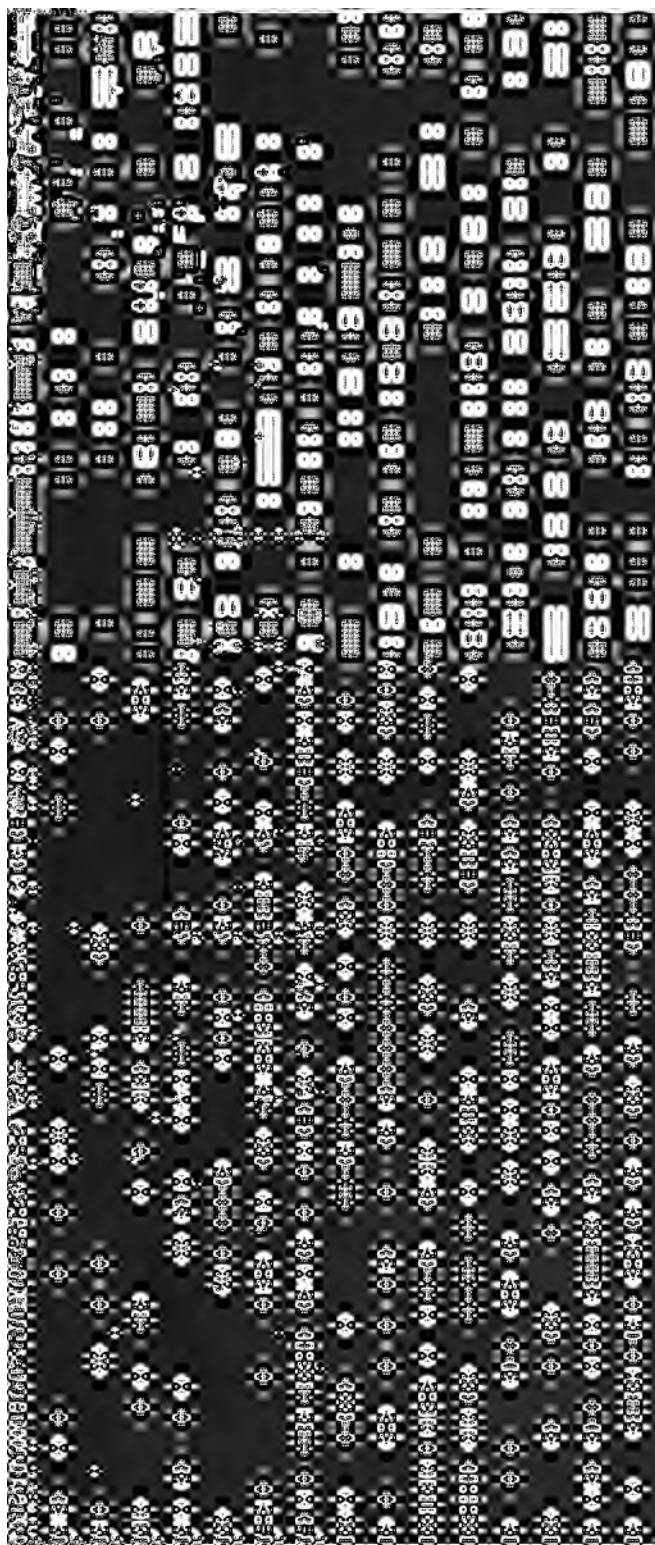
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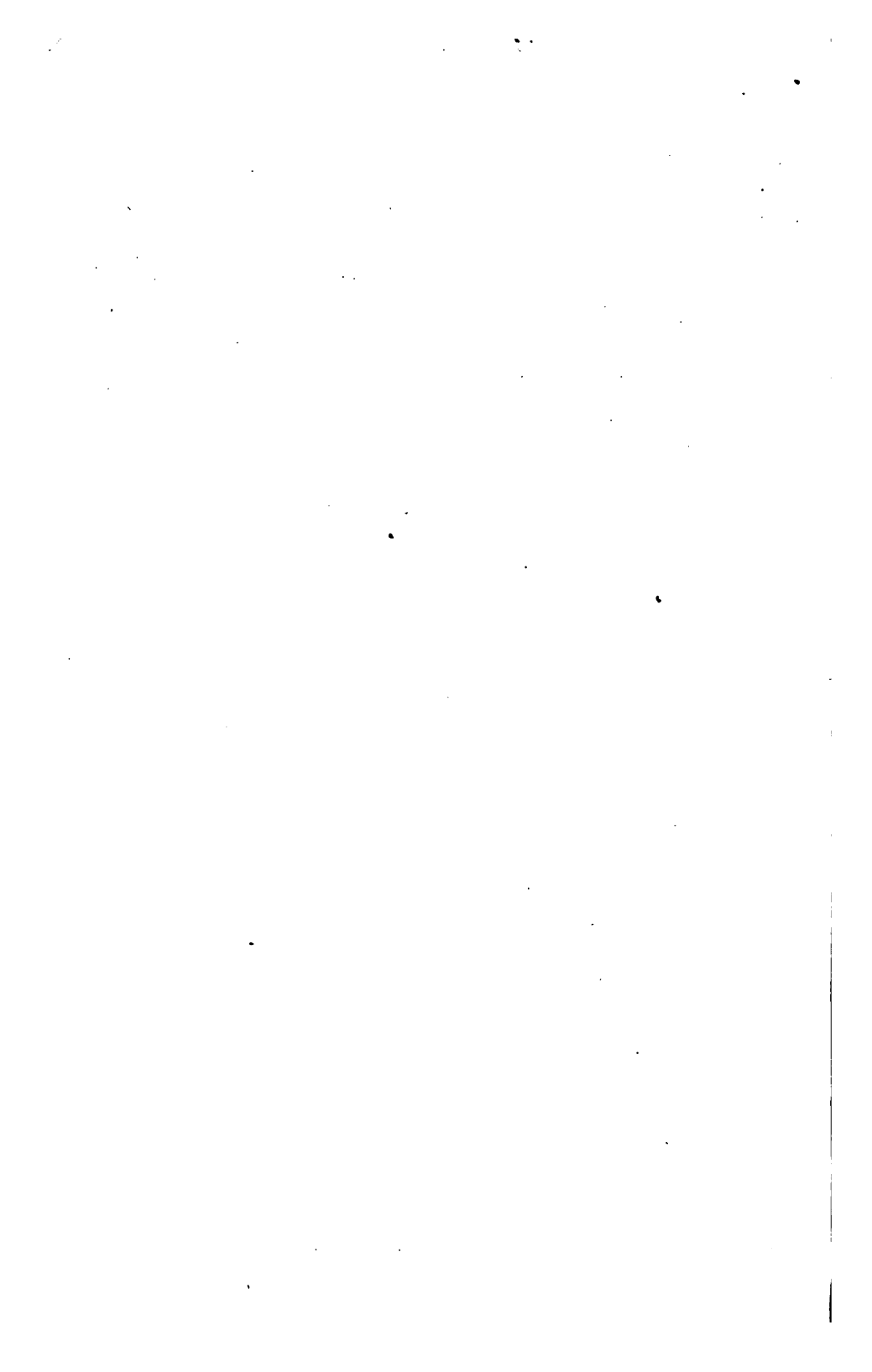












My dear Mr. Fox:
J. - From the Author. Mss. 7-102
344.

A

LECTURE
ON
TRADITION,

READ

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY,
IN THE DIVINITY SCHOOL, OXFORD,

ON THURSDAY, MARCH 7th, 1839,

WITH ADDITIONS,

BY

R. D. HAMPDEN, D. D.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, ETC.

LONDON:

B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE STREET.

1839.

1303. e. 29.

according to my office, moderate, if I might be patiently and candidly heard, between the disputants on each side of the questions involved in this great argument. And, at any rate, I would satisfy my own conscience, by not leaving unsaid, what I conceive may be useful, in order to a right understanding of the matters in dispute.

Though, too, I may state nothing original on the subject, and the substance of what I shall advance may be familiar to several here present, yet it may do good, to “stir up the pure minds” of some, by putting them in “remembrance” of what they know; whilst I more particularly address myself to those who have yet to sound the depths of this controversy, and endeavour to confirm them in their hold of a fundamental principle of our Church. For it is to the junior part of the University that the labours of this Chair, originally designed for the Inceptors in Arts, are now practically devoted. For their needs, I feel myself especially called upon to consult. For their benefit, (for, none of us hold his place in the world, be it what it may, but for some special providence, and some wise and benevolent design of God in regard to it,) I may humbly trust, I have been permitted to discharge the duties of this office now for the space of three years, “through evil report and good report,”—amidst much discouragement, and yet much encouragement,—under the burthen of the unmerited suspicion and dislike of some, and yet cheered and supported by the good-will and in-

dulgence and respect of others,—depressed at times with fears of my own incompetence to the arduous work set before me, and yet refreshed by the promises of Divine Grace on all humble and hearty endeavours, and, in particular, by that comforting assurance, “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”

Let me not be supposed, however, to allude to these circumstances of trial, in the way of reproach, or resentment, or complaint. If there has been enmity exerted, and indignity received, it were well at least, could those unhappy feelings of our fallen nature, which such circumstances call forth and foster, be subdued and silenced by that great law of Charity, without which, all our earnest contentions for the Faith, are as nothing,—and by the paramount obligation of us all, to promote with one heart and one mouth the welfare of our common Zion. And may God grant us the right mind to learn from such occasions as that to which I have been referring, the hard lesson of Christian humiliation before Him, the Searcher of hearts ; and enable those, between whom offences have arisen, to say, in the true spirit of the Apostle Paul, “Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am, for I am as ye are ; ye have not injured me at all.” I only advert to the peculiar circumstances of my case, in order to point out distinctly, that I am influenced by no personal or party feeling in addressing myself

to the subject now before us,—that I desire simply to discharge a duty providentially imposed on me, by stating, to the best of my judgment, the truth, on a subject demanding our especial consideration at this time, and on which the junior members of the University will naturally look to me for an expression of my views. God forbid that I should ever employ this Chair for any mere selfish purpose, or any purpose but that of the Christian edification for which it was instituted. I am not come here to censure or to praise any one. The fundamental constitution of the University has appointed the Regius Professor of Divinity a judge of heretical opinions. So far as I am personally concerned, I have nothing to regret, but much rather to rejoice, that this charge is not laid upon me ; however strenuously I must object to a suspension of the ancient constitution of the University in regard to the office itself, and the assumption of a power not conceded by our Charters and Statutes, and the establishment of a precedent, so insignificant in its effect, and yet so dangerous to the future repose of this place. I desire, for my part, to be no man's censurer ; as I am answerable for no man's error but my own. But principles and opinions, every one is entitled to discuss ; and in matters of Theology especially am I entitled, or rather indeed required, to do so, by the prescription of my office. And I would take this opportunity of observing, that far more effectual service would be done to the

cause of Truth and Religion,—those high convictions and professions of duty, by which men apologize to their own hearts and the world for their severities of judgment or conduct, would be more fully answered,—if, in questions of Truth, the *person* were altogether left out of consideration, and opinions, and arguments, and statements, were simply examined on their own merits. Misrepresentation and calumny, and, at any rate, all just ground of offence between man and man, would thus be avoided; and controversialists would be less exposed to the delusion of regarding themselves mere friends of Truth, whilst they are rather advocates of a cause, or a side, or a party, against an opponent.

It may seem strange, at the first view, that we should at this time be debating a fundamental principle of the Reformation itself,—that after nearly three centuries of happy experience of a Church-system established on the basis of Scripture-authority, we should be inquiring into the Authority due to Tradition in the Church of God, and wrangling about boundary-lines which it was one great business of the Reformation to ascertain and fix*. No principle so broadly and positively separates our Church from that of Rome, as the limit placed by our Reformers to the authoritative source of Divine Truth. And yet it is now eagerly asked, what is the nature and use of Tradition;—as if we had yet to settle

* Note I.

the terms of difference between Rome and ourselves,—as if the wisdom and piety of our forefathers had not already decided them for us. Still stranger is it, that controversy should be going on among ourselves, among members of the Church of England itself, and not only members but ministers of that Church, as to the estimation in which our Church holds Tradition,—a controversy in the presence of our Article declaring the sufficiency of Scripture to salvation, and excluding every thing not contained in Scripture from being required of any man as necessary to salvation. But the strangeness of all this disappears, when we look to the freedom of discussion which our Church allows,—to the waywardness of the human mind,—to the love of contradiction,—to the tendency of men to obviate error, or supposed error, by insisting on some principle the most opposite to that which they would impugn,—the tendency again, to contract statements of a truth into the most precise form, or to take advantage of the absence of extreme precision, to interpret a given statement according to some peculiar view. These, and other natural principles of human conduct, acted on by the force of circumstances,—situated as our Church is in relation to that of Rome on the one hand, and the various Protestant Communions on the other,—must be expected to produce alternations of opinion within the Church itself, on such points more especially as belong to its distinctive character. And as our Church,

from its very moderation, may seem, when viewed from the opposite extreme either of ultra-protestantism, or of ultra-catholicism, to approximate to the other;—or again, from that very moderation, is liable to be claimed by either of the extremes as agreeing with it in principle;—it is not to be wondered at, that, in such a position, we should be subject to agitations from within, even on questions deeply affecting our existence as a Catholic, and yet Reformed and Protestant, Church. May we hope and pray, that, by the Divine blessing, this agitation of the waters may result in their purification; and that the Church, as a tree of God's planting, may both firmly stand the shaking of the tempest without, and present a heart of oak to the gnawings of the canker that would consume it within.

I have referred to the moderation of our Church,—its distinctive character, as it is separated from the extremes to which it may appear to approximate. I need not state that, at this period, the prevailing disposition, or rather the tendency of that energy which is most busily working among us, is to represent the Church in its points of resemblance to Roman-catholicism, and throw it into strong contrast with the spirit of Protestantism. Thus it is, that we find the subject of Tradition now so studiously brought into notice, and elaborate arguments drawn from the stores of ancient controversy, adduced to prove the traditionary derivation of the doctrines of the Church, or the

insufficiency of Scripture for salvation, until its treasures have been unlocked by the key of a supposed Divine Tradition of Doctrines and Interpretations, and Rites.

As I feel it my duty to oppose this statement, it will be proper for me in the first instance,—lest I should seem to incur the fault, which I have just noticed, of meeting an erroneous opinion by its direct contrary,—to state that view of the nature of Tradition which is maintained, as I conceive, by the Church of England, and which accordingly I would advocate.

Let me be understood then, as one most ready to concede very great importance to Tradition, taken in its most comprehensive and popular sense, as an authentic collection of Doctrines, Interpretations, and Rites, existing in the Christian Church by the side of the Bible. But then I attribute no *divine* authority to it in itself. It is divine only as it is shone upon by Scripture. Like the giant of heathen story, it has strength only as it touches the solid and holy ground of Scripture. Take it by itself, as something existing independently of the Bible, and it has no vitality in it. I will go along with the most ardent admirer of antiquity, in expressing my veneration for truth that comes down to us with the hoar of ages upon it, and for whatever is associated with the piety and constancy of our forefathers in the faith. But I remember, that I must not make my religion a matter of imagination, or even of feeling exclusively,—that because

I am disposed to love and cherish a precious relic of antiquity, I must not suffer it to tempt me to superstition and an idolatrous reverence of itself. If some are inclined, like those objectors in the time of Ignatius, to rest the whole cause of the Gospel on the appeal to antiquity, I would reply with Ignatius;—*ἐμοὶ δὲ ἀρχαία ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς, τὰ ἄθικτα ἀρχαία ὁ σταυρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ θάνατος, καὶ ἡ ἀνάστασις αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἡ πίστις ἡ δι' αὐτοῦ*^b.

Whilst therefore I fully receive all the information which ecclesiastical antiquity can impart, as most valuable evidence of the truths of the Gospel, I deny to it the prerogative which belongs to Scripture alone, of revealing to me what I am religiously bound to believe. I will accept it as *confirmation*,—and most important confirmation,—of what I am bound to believe as taught by Scripture; but I will not absolutely resign myself to its teaching, as a primary authentic revelation from God in itself. Its witness to the truth of what is set forth in Scripture, shall be respectfully, nay, devoutly heard, and attended to; but it must not dictate what I am to believe, as Scripture does, or require my unquestioning submission to its authority without further appeal. Nor if I scrupulously examine into it, and require that it should be proved to be divine by the evidence of Scripture, am I to be accounted as one slow to believe, and as demanding an impossible evidence for supernatural truth. For I

^b Ignat. Ep. ad Philadelph. c. 8.

am most ready to believe all that has the evidence of its being God's Truth, with whatever difficulties it may be accompanied to my understanding. I require nothing more than the evidence, that it *is* His Truth. Further, I will readily take the Tradition of Christian Truth along with me, as my guide to the knowledge of what Scripture reveals; but I will not exalt my guide into an oracle; nor, because the training hand and voice of the Church have been my first introduction to the Gospel, will I regard this my ecclesiastical education, as *essential* to the due understanding of the Scriptures in order to salvation. As a valid and important confirmation then to the evidence of Scripture, on every point of faith and discipline,—as a providential guide to the right understanding of the truth revealed in Scripture,—and a reasonable inducement to the reception of that truth,—I most highly esteem the mass of religious instruction which we familiarly designate by the name of Tradition; but I cannot carry my estimation of Tradition beyond this limit.

This is the limit which I am persuaded our Church has fixed to our reverence for Tradition. The 6th Article speaks clearly enough as to the exclusion of any other authority but that of Scripture in matters of faith. The first Homily also declares, that “There is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation, but that is, or may be, drawn out of that fountain and well of truth;” and forbids

our running to "men's traditions, devised by men's imaginations, for our justification and salvation;" since "in Holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to eschew, what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hands, at length."

The Church speaks to the same purport, when it requires no other divine knowledge of the candidate for Deacons' orders, but that he be "sufficiently instructed in Holy Scripture^c;" and of its ministers of every order no submission to any authority in matters of faith, but to "the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament^d." It is very remarkable too, how, throughout the Ordination Services, the Church sets its seal on the Bible as the only "Word of God." Controversial statements would not find a place in offices of prayer; but the Church seems throughout these admirable services protesting against the error of dividing God's word into two partial rules; and very pointedly so, when it gives the New Testament into the hands of its Deacons, with authority to read and to preach the Gospel, and the whole Bible into the hands of its fully-commissioned ministers, its Priests and Bishops, as "the Word of God" which they are to preach, and the warrant of their ministrations. Had our Church held Tradition as an authority co-ordinate with Scripture, it would surely have introduced some reference to such an authority in the Services of

^c Pref. to the Ordin. Serv.

^d Ordin. Serv.

Ordination. It would have spoken of the Doctrine or Faith of the Church,—not simply, as it does, of “the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church and Realm hath received the same, according to the commandments of God^e ;” and would have expressly required its minister to believe as the Church believes, or to receive nothing but what the Church receives ; instead of pointing with such impressive solemnity to *Prayer*, in conjunction with “reading” and “exercise in the Scriptures,” and “thinking upon the things contained” in them, as the means in order to “the true understanding of the same^f.”

But the silence, not only of the Ordination Services, but of the Articles, on the subject of Tradition, is very emphatic. Here again, had Tradition been regarded by the framers of the Articles as in any respect *authoritative* in matters either of discipline or faith, its authority would surely have been stated in conjunction with that of Scripture. But the subject is not even mentioned in the Articles, except as it is connected with the rites and ceremonies of the Church. We have an Article, *De Ecclesiasticis Traditionibus* ; “*On the Traditions of the Church.*” Here it may be thought we have a recognition of Traditions of some kind at least. But let us turn to the work of Bellarmine, *De Verbo Dei*, which treats the subject methodically, and we

^e Ordering of Priests.

^f Ib. and Consec. of Bishops.

there find the explanation of what are called "Traditions of the Church." Bellarmine divides Tradition into three heads: 1. Divine; 2. Apostolical; 3. Ecclesiastical. The first two kinds are, according to him, authoritative; differing only in their *original form* of communication; those called Divine, being such as were imparted by our Lord himself to the Apostles: those called Apostolical, being such as were received by the Apostles by immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit;—whereas those called Ecclesiastical, or Traditions of the Church, claim no divine authority, but are merely usages or customs begun of old by the prelates or people, and which by tacit consent have obtained the force of law^s. These last, accordingly, our Church admits, not regarding their want of Scripture-authority as any objection to their reception; so that they be not repugnant to Scripture, and that they be edifying in their use. By this remarkable silence of the Articles on the subject of Tradition, considered as an authoritative source of doctrine or discipline, and their reference only to those traditions which do not rest on Scripture-authority, it is plain, that the Church does not intend that Tradition should in any sense constitute a part of our Rule of Faith.

But it has been objected, that the Church of England sets forth Scripture, not as an

^s De Verbo Dei, l. 4. c. 2.

original evidence or source of God's Truth, but rather as the test of the truth conveyed down by the Church. The reverse in fact of the view which I have taken of the teaching of the Church, has been stated to be the just account of our 6th Article ;—that Tradition is the *primary source* of Doctrine, and Scripture its *confirmation* ;—not Scripture the *primary source*, and Tradition only the *confirmation*. Now it might be enough to disprove this assertion, to appeal to the ground on which the 8th Article requires our acceptance of the three Creeds. The three Creeds, the Nicene, the Athanasian, and the Apostles' Creed, are to be received, "*because they may be proved* by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture." Would not a clause have been inserted in this place, intimating that Tradition was the source of the doctrines contained in the Creeds, had it been intended to guard the principle of Divine Tradition ? Undoubtedly, we receive the Creeds as *documents*, as we do the sacred books themselves, by Tradition : and we may for that reason alone give them a reverent attention. But the same Tradition which fully accredits them as *documents*, does not establish their *inspiration* ; and they cannot therefore be received as containing truths of God, on *their own evidence*. But the truths which they declare, being found in Scripture, it then becomes a powerful confirmation of them, or rather of their having been rightly collected from Scripture, that they are also found in such venerable documents of the early Church. And fur-

ther, the documents themselves become, for the same reason, and not merely because they have been handed down to us, most worthy of our reception. This accordingly appears to me the view which our Church has expressed in its Article on the Creeds, and in its sanction of what ancient Fathers have faithfully collected and taught out of Scripture. That the Church indeed does not place its Creeds, or any part of its ritual on the footing of *divine* authority, is sufficiently evident from the Preface to the Book of Common Prayer; where it is asserted, that “the Book, as it stood before established by law, doth not contain in it any thing contrary to the word of God, or to sound doctrine, or which a godly man may not with a good conscience use and submit unto, or which is not fairly defensible against any that shall oppose the same; if it shall be allowed such just and favourable construction as in common equity ought to be allowed to *all human writings*, especially such as are set forth by authority, and even to the very best translations of the Holy Scripture itself.”

It is further, however, objected, that we should not have been led to the discovery of the truth in Scripture without Tradition,—that Tradition tells us *first* what truths may be collected out of Scripture, and that then we proceed to draw them out, and not otherwise. Whence, it is inferred, that the truths are assumed as already possessing their *evidence* on the ground of Tradition; and that Scripture coming subsequently, only serves the

office of confirming and establishing the original existing evidence from Tradition. Our Article speaks of doctrines being “established” by Scripture, when it excludes the Apocryphal books; or, as the Latin Article speaking of these books says, the Church does not apply them *ad dogmata confirmanda*; assuming, that is, that we have the doctrines already before us when we come to the investigation of Scripture. But clearly the Article is here describing what takes place *actually*,—the state of the case as it is,—and drawing from it a practical criterion for discriminating between Canonical and Apocryphal Books. No one would deny, that we, who are brought up in the Faith, have the great leading doctrines in hand when we search the Scriptures, and that *practically* we do establish or confirm them as known to us already by Scripture. Nor would any of us who undertake to teach the Gospel to others, admit, that its truths were *yet* to be *searched out*; for this would imply, that we had not already assured ourselves that what we teach are its truths. But the true theory of the use of Scripture is the reverse of this. Scripture is our source. As Tertullian says, “what we are, that the Scriptures are from their beginning; out of them we are;” *quod sumus, hoc sunt Scripturæ ab initio suo; ex illis sumus*^h. The truths of Religion, according to our Article, are all there; being either expressly contained in Scripture, or

manifestly to be collected from it. If so, they may be discovered there, as in their proper source, though our experience may not inform us of any one who has so discovered them. Take the case of the truths of physical science. Except to those who are the discoverers of any new fact, the theory to be investigated by observation and experiment is already known. But it is not for that reason thought to be less grounded in the nature of things, because we have only verified it, and not originally found it out by our own researches into Nature. And as all inquirers into the laws of Nature, readily avail themselves of former discoveries, and ascertained theories, and even reasonable hypotheses, for aiding their own investigations; so do all sober inquirers into God's revealed ways take along with them, what former searchers of Scripture and proficient in sacred wisdom have already obtained from Scripture. And yet it remains that, as what is ultimately learned and taught by the physical philosopher, is the Wisdom of God in Nature, so what is ultimately learned and taught by the Scriptural student, with all his previous steps and accessions of knowledge from without, is God's Wisdom in Scripture.

It will be urged perhaps, that there is a great difference between our religious and our physical knowledge. Clearly there is as to results;—higher and more comprehensive principles being obtained by the progress of physical investigations; whereas religious knowledge sets out from

the highest principles, to which no new researches of man can add. But I am speaking of the method of investigation only,—and of that under one point of analogy only,—the fact, that we set out with knowing the truth in physical science most commonly, as we do in religious knowledge. And this is the point to which I refer, as an illustration, how Scripture is to us at this day, with all our stores of traditional wisdom, the sole oracle of Divine Truth.

As for making Tradition the source of our Christian knowledge independently of all investigation, and dispensing accordingly with methodical inquiry into the statements of Scripture,—this appears to be the like absurdity as saying, that the study of optics is superseded, because we were originally informed by others that this particular object is a tree, or a stone, or a man; or that when we perceive what the object is, we can dispense with the laws by which we see it, and that the philosopher who explores those laws is gratuitously inventing a method of seeing.

Let it be granted, further, that the first persons who possessed the sacred truths,—for example, the Apostles, and other inspired teachers, and their immediate hearers,—obtained them without any process of investigation; and that the truths have descended to us, as originally so taught and learned, by a transmission of them apart from Scripture. Nay, the case is very conceivable, of a whole Church, as the people alluded to by Irenæus, receiving the leading

truths of the Gospel without the Bible¹. What is this, but a providential and gracious disposition of things, in order that man may not miss the truths necessary for salvation? Many are thus enabled to hold the Truth, who could not find it out for themselves, or establish the proofs of it. For what Butler says of the importance of Revelation may be applied no less, changing only a word, to the usefulness of a traditional information respecting the truths of Scripture. "It is impossible to say, who would have been able to have reasoned out that whole system, which we call" revealed "Religion, in its genuine simplicity, clear of superstition: but there is certainly no ground to think that the generality could. If they could, there is no sort of probability that they would. Admitting there were, they would highly want a standing admonition to remind them of it, and inculcate it upon them^k." So important is the service, which the perpetual preaching of the truth has been, to the understanding and general reception of the Gospel. Let none undervalue this service. Let none reject it. Let none slight a help providentially designed for him, or presumptuously think that he is equal to the investigation of Scripture by dint of his own unaided reason^l. But because he

¹ Con. Hær. 3. c. 4. p. 178.

^k Anal. P. 2. c. 1. p. 198.

^l Nam si nulla certa ad sapientiam salutemque animis via est, nisi cum eos rationi præcolit fides, quid est aliud ingratum esse opi atque auxilio divino, quam tanto labori præditæ authoritati velle resistere? Et si unaquæque disciplina, quanquam vilis et facilis, ut

duly avails himself of it, because he experiences the advantage of its guidance, let him not interpret this providential help to the disparagement of the integrity and sufficiency of the Scriptures. Nor therefore let him rashly conclude, that what in general is requisite for the right understanding of the Bible, is absolutely essential in all cases; so as to lay down the proposition, that it is impossible for the Bible to be understood without the accompanying tradition of Doctrines. For after all it must be acknowledged that the Bible speaks plainly enough as to all the fundamentals of salvation. "Practical Christianity, or that faith and behaviour which renders a man a Christian, is a plain and obvious thing, like the common rules of conduct with respect to our ordinary temporal affairs^m." And though it would be folly and arrogance in any of us to whom helps are afforded, to despise those helps, who can deny to the pious searcher into Scripture, that blessing which God's word itself has attached to the work? If there be the disposition which Christ requires of those who come to him,—and if the Holy Spirit is ever ready, as we know, to assist those who earnestly seek His aid; who shall say, that the Bible may not in some

percipi possit, doctorem aut magistrum requirit, quid temerariæ superbiæ plenius, quam divinorum sacramentorum libros, et ab interpretibus suis nolle cognoscere, et incognitas velle damnare? Augustin. de Util. Cred. 36, e.—Note II.

^m Anal. P. 2. c. 3. p. 248.—In iis enim quæ aperte posita in Scriptura sunt, inveniuntur illa omnia, quæ continent fidem moresque vivendi. Augustin. de Doct. Ch. l. 2. c. 9.

instances, *at once*, speak its own divine instructions to the heart and understanding of its devout reader, without the intervention of the human expositor ?

But though it were the case that in no instance are the truths of the Gospel obtained from the Bible without some previous instruction and guidance from the Christian Church, this would not authorize the conclusion, that the Bible was not the proper and exclusive authority on the subject. For, to cite again the words of Butler, adapted by the change of a word to our present purpose, "it is to be remembered that, how much soever the establishment of" scriptural "religion in the world is owing to" Tradition, "this does not destroy the proof of Religion from" Scripture, "any more than the proof of Euclid's Elements is destroyed by a man's knowing, or thinking, that he should never have seen the truth of the several propositions contained in it, nor had those propositions come into his thoughts, but for that mathematician".

Looking indeed to the analogy of Natural Religion, we may assume the probability of the fact being the other way. As Natural Religion probably was derived from an original Revelation, so probably the tradition of Gospel-truth owes itself, so far as it is pure and sound, to the Scripture-revelation as its original. The tradition of the Gospel would probably have been lost, or obscured, or perverted, just as that of Natural Re-

ⁿ Anal. P. 2. c. 7. p. 367.

ligion has been, had not the Bible existed, as the great original and standing corrective of the aberrations and obscurities of the tradition of the Gospel. History, indeed, as strongly evidences the latter fact, as it does the former.

So far then from asserting, as some do, that we must bring our researches into the Bible under the supervision of Tradition,—Tradition must be evidenced, corrected, purified, determined by Scripture. Scripture exhibits, so far as anything finite can approximate to the infinite, the eternal ideas of the Divine mind in their own fixed unvarying character, ever the same. Tradition only very imperfectly represents the Divine sameness of God's Truth, reproducing it, as it may, by successive repetitions. And though in the stream of Tradition, as in the successions of Time itself, there may be no pause, and the succession of doctrines may have been continuous throughout, still this is nothing, in point of truth and excellence, to that eternal invariableness—that everlasting present—which, as it belongs to Eternity itself, belongs analogously to the one standing record of the Divine counsels.

Would you then fix the passing, ever-flowing Tradition of the truth,—would you correct the illusions which belong to its temporary evanescent form,—would you not mistake shadows for realities—a science of the variable, for the eternal knowledge of the invariable and Divine—study Tradition in the light of Scripture,—fix the shifting forms of Tradition by looking to the realities

contained in Scripture. You will be told that Scripture is obscure and difficult, and capable of an infinite variety of interpretations. But how idle is it to impute the imperfection and weakness and perversity of man to the Divine record itself? If Scripture is difficult, seek an instructor and guide; listen to the expositions of those set over you in the Lord; examine your own motives and capacities for interpreting it; pray for a right understanding of it. And is not Tradition far more difficult and obscure in itself, than Scripture is in itself? To understand Tradition rightly, you require a far more voluminous reading, than for a competent knowledge of the Bible in order to salvation. For unless, with the Roman Catholics, you resolve Tradition into the authority of the *present* Church, you must go through all the ecclesiastical writers of the primitive ages, and interpret a variety of statements consistently with one another, and so trace the chain of Truth in unbroken series up to its first link. And should you, after all this labour, doubt of an interpretation at any point, what is to fix the sense for you,—what is to decide for you the *true* tradition, out of several interpretations and doctrines, which will necessarily be brought before you in such a search? You will be answered; look to what has been taught at all times, and in all places, and by all persons;—an interminable and impracticable labour,—and even, were it accomplished, incapable of giving positive satisfaction as to the truth, though it may nega-

tively conclude as to what is not the truth. But what is the answer which the Articles of the Church of England give in such a case—Search the Scriptures. The voice of Scripture will fix for you what is the true tradition, whether it be a doctrine, or a comment, about which you are in doubt. Difficulties may be thrown out to perplex you in the use of the Scripture-criterion. But you may answer, it is the *best* you have, and by God's appointment, and the order of our Church, the *ultimate* one. Doubtless, *you may err* in the use of it; but it is *in itself infallible*. You may err also in the use of the Tradition-criterion; but then it is further *in itself fallible*; or, at any rate, you cannot be sure of its infallibility. There is labour too in proving the authenticity and canonicity of Scripture. But this is the simple labour of verifying the documents of Scripture, as to their integrity, and number, and reception among Christians. Whereas, in verifying Tradition, you must authenticate every point, one after the other. You must prove that *each* traditionary doctrine regularly descends from Apostolic times, without any interruption whatever;—an interminable and impracticable labour, as I have said.

I am aware, however, that this account of the difficulty accompanying the verification of Tradition, may be invidiously represented. It will be paralleled with the difficulty belonging to Scripture; and you will be charged with inconsistency in receiving Scripture notwithstanding

its difficulties, and rejecting Tradition *on account* of its difficulties. The objection is both invidious and illōgical. It is invidious, to magnify the difficulties of Scripture, a confessed authentic record of God's counsels and dealings, in order to prepare the way for Tradition, a controverted organ of divine truth—to throw back on what *we all agree to be divine*, the doubts and suspicions belonging to a *questionable* source of divine instruction ; whilst it is actually denied by the disputants on one side, that Tradition is of divine authority. But the objection is, further, illogical ; because the difficulties belonging to Tradition are of a different kind from those which belong to Scripture. The difficulties of Tradition are strictly those of *Evidence* : whereas the Evidence of Scripture is most satisfactory and indisputable. The difficulties of Scripture come *after* its evidence ; being such as arise, either from the mysteries of which it treats, or from its nature as an ancient record of divine things. But to make the analogy valid, it should first be conceded that Tradition is evidenced as a divine instruction, and then, that the difficulties belonging to it are of the same kind as those belonging to Scripture. Such is the case in Butler's argument from the course and constitution of nature. And his Analogy accordingly is a just and valid argument. But it is a vain parade of ingenious illustrations of the difficulties accompanying the rejection of Tradition, to point out, and dilate to the utmost, seeming inconsistencies or difficulties in Scrip-

ture. The analogy, you should reply, does not hold ; and no illustration, much less argument, can be drawn from one case to the other. Such representations may act as means to awe down pious and susceptible minds into submission to the authority of Tradition. I fear, however, the *general* effect, so far as they are attended to, will be, to weaken the just impression of the exclusive sanctity of the Scripture-records, by placing them on the level of disputable Tradition. But I trust your true Protestant loyalty to Scripture, and your deep reverence of the Holy Spirit speaking there, will induce you to turn from such offensive parallels with disgust.

We are sometimes told, too, that if we reject the authority of Tradition, we must reject with it our grounds for acknowledging the Canon of Scripture, as also for holding several particular articles of our Religion,—for example, Infant-Baptism. I need scarcely observe to you, that this head of objection has been very fully considered and refuted by several of our older divines, in their controversies with Romanists. It may be enough to refer you to the answer of Bishop Taylor in his *Dissuasive from Popery*. The objection turns on a confusion between Authority and Testimony. Certainly the Canon of Scripture is established by Tradition ; if by Tradition we mean the constant testimony of the Church. But this testimony gives no *divine* authority to the truths contained in the Canon. Their divine authority is a doctrine, derived from the internal

evidence of it in the Books themselves, as other doctrines are; that is, from the express attestation of the sacred text to its own inspiration, and the miracles and other marks of divinity accompanying this attestation. As for Infant-Baptism; we know that the grace of Baptism is a doctrine of Scripture; and that our Lord's command to baptize, is in Scripture: and, consequently, that the general necessity of baptism is also a doctrine of Scripture. But these points being established, it is clear that we may be guided, in the administration of Baptism to individuals at this or that time of life, by the practice existing in primitive times; provided we do not prescribe any particular period not prescribed in Scripture, as necessary and indispensable to the due reception of the sacrament, nor enjoin any thing inconsistent with the Scriptural institution of it. Now our Church has not laid itself open to these objections. It has left the question of the *time* of administering Baptism as open as Scripture has left it; and it does not therefore go beyond the text of Scripture, nor require, consequently, *authority* from any other source for what it does in this respect. It simply enjoins, that we should not depart from an usage in the Church in regard to infants, because that usage is most agreeable to the institution of Christ. Whether the baptism of infants be agreeable, or no, to the institution of Christ, is a point which Scripture alone is able to attest. So that even in this matter, in which we seem, on a superficial view, to be resting on Tradition

as an authority, we are throughout looking to the authority of Scripture°.

There is no irreverence, or want of faith, it should be observed, in refusing to acknowledge any thing to be equally binding on your faith and acceptance, which has not an *equal* evidence of its authenticity and divinity with Scripture. You must not be deterred therefore by arguments *ad verecundiam*—by reproaches of incredulity—by taunts of your setting up private judgment against the judgment of God declared by the Church. You ask only for the authority of Tradition, the like evidence to that on which you receive Scripture. The point at issue is, that the evidence is not the same in kind. It is no question of the right of private judgment, in contradistinction to that of the many, and the wise, and the gifted. You ask only a corresponding public universal judgment on the case of Tradition, to that which you have for the direction of your private judgment in regard to Scripture. You believe what God has said in Scripture, because it has Scripture-evidence for it; being assured that “unless you believe” you cannot “be established” in the truth; for that there is no knowing any thing of God but by commencing with believing Him. But you believe Scripture, because you have full and distinct evidence to its authenticity and its divinity. Let Tradition be in like manner authenticated and proved-divine, and you will then as readily

° This point is well argued in Stillingfleet's *Grounds of Prot. Rel.* P. 1. c. 4. pp. 105–109.

believe the word of God so conveyed, if it be indeed such, as you now believe His written word.

I do not advert here to the distinction between oral and written teaching, because, in point of fact, the distinction does not exist now. All Traditions are now written. For, as Bellarmine points out, a tradition differs only from a scripture in the circumstance of "not being written by the *first author* of it^p." The controversy then is actually between the Bible and the statements of Fathers and Councils. To argue your incredulity, therefore, in rejecting the authority of Tradition, it must be shown that the statements of Fathers and Councils, are no less divine and no less authentic than Scripture.

Nor is it necessary to dwell on the distinction of Tradition into Dogmatic and Hermeneutic. It is not material to the argument now in hand. For it is against imputing a *divine authority* to any Traditions whatever that I am contending. I may remark, however, that though a Tradition of interpretations is apparently more consistent with the assertion of the doctrinal sufficiency of Scripture, it still as really impairs that sufficiency, if such interpretations be regarded as positively fixing the sense of Scripture. The supposed authoritative interpretations would in

^p Vocatur autem doctrina non scripta, non ea quæ nusquam scripta est, sed quæ non est scripta a primo auctore. Exemplo sit, Baptismus parvulorum. Parvulos baptizandos, vocatur traditio Apostolica non scripta, quia non invenitur hoc scriptum in ullo Apostolico libro, tametsi scriptum est in libris fere omnium veterum Patrum. Bellarmin. De Verb. Dei. l. 4. c. 2.

that case be the proper revelation ; and Scripture would be but subordinate and instrumental to the conveyance of the Truth, instead of being *itself* the *direct* conveyance of the Truth. Further, a system of Divine Traditive Interpretations reduces itself to an infinite series ; and is consequently of no practical use. For, suppose a doubt to arise about the meaning of a given interpretation ; how is that to be solved but by another interpretation of the interpretation itself, and so on without end ? The only method by which a stop can be put to this infinite series, is, the interposition of a decisive authority,—an authority without appeal,—at some point. And whether with the Church of Rome we fix that point in the decisions of the present Church, or in those of the early centuries, we must equally assert a divine authority of Tradition at that point. Indeed, the method adopted by the Church of Rome is the only consistent way of getting out of the perplexity of the infinite series of traditive interpretations. For those who would fix the limit,—say of the Fourth century,—require us in fact to take their interpretations of the doctrines of that century, as authorities without appeal, and consequently as divine. They virtually agree with the Church of Rome as to the principle of Tradition. Only they will not let the Church of Rome speak for them, but they must themselves speak in the name of the Church. At the same time they would relieve themselves of the invidiousness of declaring the divine truth on *their*

own authority, by throwing back their decisions on the Church of former ages, and overshadowing them with the name and awe of Antiquity.

There is, however, a still more subtle view of the nature of Tradition which I must notice. It is that which represents it in close and immediate connection with Scripture,—as the supplement of Scripture,—as a full expression of what is covertly contained in Scripture,—or, as a Roman Catholic writer has stated it, “the word unwritten in the Scriptures^p.” We are referred, in proof of this view, to the indirect manner of Scripture,—to the mere hints and allusions by which often the highest doctrines are intimated. It is argued, that this indirectness and incompleteness of form in Scripture, point to some more direct and systematic teaching as its exposition and supplement. This view evidently coincides with that before stated, which assigns to the Church the prerogative of being the authoritative source of doctrine, whilst virtually it makes Scripture a dead letter apart from the vivifying comment of the human teacher, and thus concedes to the Romanist all that he desires. But such a statement of Tradition is more likely to insinuate itself into the minds of Protestants, because it maintains in sound the sufficiency of Scripture; the whole that is thus represented as taught by the Church being stated to be *contained in Scripture*. But what sort of sufficiency is this? Is it

^p Cited by Bp. Marsh, in his *Comparative View of the Churches of England and Rome*, c. 7. p. 154.

a sufficiency to salvation in Scripture itself, as asserted in our 6th Article? Quite otherwise. It is a sufficiency only for the purpose of the authorized teacher. It makes the Bible the book of the minister of religion, a revelation to the priest,—and not the hand-book, as it is, of every man that has an ear to hear and a soul to be refreshed by its living word. And in what way can any thing be said to be *contained in* a book which is actually *supplied from without*? That a doctrine is *indirectly* stated, or only alluded to, in *some* passages of Scripture, instead of being *formally* stated, is no proof of its not being *sufficiently* stated in Scripture at large. By putting together a number of hints or indirect statements, and interpreting them according to “the analogy of faith,” a strong *direct* proof results of every doctrine of our faith. And though as I have said, we are providentially guided beforehand to a knowledge of the leading articles of our faith, this is no prejudice to our assertion that on examination of Scripture we trace them all as *evidently* written in its pages, though not everywhere in full and *express* terms, or such as oblige a man to admit the truths whether he will or no. But this indirectness of the language of Scripture has been greatly exaggerated. From the way in which the indirectness of Scripture-teaching is sometimes put forward by the advocates of the authority of Tradition, one might really suppose that Scripture was written in cipher, or in dark and mystic hieroglyphics; or that it was merely a sug-

gestive treatise, like some of the writings of the philosophers of old, designed only for the master eye and master hand. The truth is, indeed, that Scripture is "written within and without,"—that there are secrets in it which are not read by every vain intruder into its sanctuary. Still it is open to all; "the word is very nigh" unto us; and the knowledge which is hidden from the wise and prudent, from the conceited, and the curious, and the carnal, will be revealed to "babes,"—to those that seek it in simplicity of faith, content with that evidence which is adapted to their nature and state of trial in the world.

It is instructive to observe here,—for it should impress on us the value of the moderation of our Church,—how the advocate of Authoritative Tradition coincides with the ultra-protestant, in denying the openness of Scripture, and its immediate application to the use of private Christians. The Puritan teachers, in maintaining their theory of the dependence of spiritual edification on the efficacy of Preaching, taught, under the name of the Word preached in Sermons, precisely the same view of Scripture, in which the theory of Authoritative Tradition has involved its supporters. The language of the two extremes is different; but the principle is the same. Expounding, and Sermons, and special gifts of interpretation, are stated to be the conveyance of the Divine Truth in the one: Apostolic Succession, the grace of Ordination, Sacerdotal autho-

rity, are the means of its transmission, in the other. In both systems, the Word is regarded as contained in Scripture, but latent. According to both, the light must come from without : for until the preacher expounds, or the priest opens the seal, the sacred oracle is shut up and dark^p.

But as passages both of Scripture and of the Fathers are adduced to prove the authority of Tradition, it will be proper, that I should consider the argument drawn from these heads.

To look first to Scripture.—St. Paul certainly refers to Traditions in several places of his Epistles. He speaks to the Thessalonians of “holding fast the Traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or by his Epistle^q ;” to the Corinthians, of sending Timothy to them to bring them into “remembrance of his ways in Christ, how he taught everywhere in every Church^r,” in addition to instructions given them in writing ; the Corinthians he also praises, for “remembering him in all things, and keeping the ordinances as he delivered them to them^s ;” he charges Timothy to “hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard of him ; to keep that good thing which had been committed unto him, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in them^t ;” he contrasts the simple instruction given to converts, at first, with the “going on unto perfection”—the “milk” for “babes” with “the strong meat for the grown.” Our

^p Note III.

^q 1 Cor. xi. 2.

^r 2 Thess. ii. 15.

^s 2 Tim. i. 13, 14.

^t 1 Cor. iv. 17.

Lord himself in the gospels is found expounding his parables to his more intimate disciples. Even to these he says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth^u;" and after his Passion, he was "seen of the Apostles forty days, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God^x." From these and the like passages of Scripture, either declaring, as it is thought, the value of Traditions, or alluding to peculiar instructions in Christian truth, supposed to be conveyed down in the Church, it has been attempted to establish a theory adverse to the sufficiency of Scripture, by the evidence of Scripture itself.

It will be observed from the application of such passages of Scripture, that the subject of Tradition closely connects itself with that of the "Discipline of the Secret" practised in the early ages of Christianity. In the argument from these texts, Tradition is supposed to be a collection of higher, fuller views of doctrine, not disclosed on the open page of the Bible. And its defence consequently is identified, on this ground, with the advocacy of a system of reserve and concealment in the propagation of Christian Truth. The Discipline of the Secret is in itself a fruitful subject of inquiry. I can only advert to it at present as it coincides with the subject of Tradition.

^u John xvi. 12, 13.

^x Acts i. 3.

That this method of reserve was adopted by Christian teachers in the early ages, is abundantly evident from the writings of Clement of Alexandria. But it does not require much argument to shew, that it obtains no countenance from the language or spirit of Scripture. The Gospel indeed is full of mystery at every point; but it is not *mystic* in its address to the world, or its mode of instruction. By it, the Lord has "destroyed the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that was spread over all nations," and revealed the mystery of the common salvation, that had before been hidden. Its system certainly was gradually unfolded to the Christian disciple in the progress of his education under it; as it was to the Apostles themselves by our Lord. But we cannot justly construe this gradual method into a mystic economy of Divine Truth itself—or a twofold system of religious teaching,—the one for the vulgar and the uninitiated, the latter for the proficient—the one written for all to read, the other borne along on the lips of the priest, and reluctantly communicated even to the faithful. Nor do the texts of Scripture usually appealed to in reference to this point, suffice for the purpose. It would take us far too long to examine them in detail. They have however been repeatedly discussed by Protestant writers, and their inconclusiveness as evidences of a doctrine of secret Tradition has been amply demonstrated.

I will only remark in reference to such appeals

to Scripture, that, even if they did apply to Tradition, in the modern sense of the term, they would not prove Tradition to be a distinct divine authority. The very attempt to establish a theory of Tradition by Scripture-evidence neutralizes itself; since it virtually ascribes the superior authority to the source from which it seeks to establish the theory. And if the existence and importance of Tradition are to be proved from Scripture, why, we may ask, should *less* evidence than Scripture be admitted for the Traditions, themselves, the particular doctrines supposed to be conveyed by Tradition. But in fact it is idle to attempt to prove the divinity of Tradition *generally*, apart from the particular doctrines of which it is made up. Would we prove therefore that Tradition is recognized in Scripture as authoritative, if we would prove anything to the purpose, we must prove that each traditional doctrine has Scripture-evidence for it, and thus acknowledge, by our very process of proof, that Scripture is our only existing *divine* source of truth. If Tradition is good as a divine source of doctrine, it must stand independently of Scripture-evidence; as the real, indisputable, primitive Tradition, that of the Apostles themselves, did. For, doubtless, whatever St. Paul, or any other inspired Teacher, delivered by word, was no less to be received than what he delivered by epistle; each kind of instruction resting separately and immediately on the authority of God miraculously evidenced in him.

Nor, again, do the passages commonly cited from the Fathers, when they are strictly examined, amount to the proof of the existence of authoritative Traditions. There are many passages which speak of the *use* of Tradition, but yet do not prove its *divine authority*—inculcating the necessity of considering what doctrines have been delivered down in the Church by the constant succession of Pastors, and what has been uniformly and universally taught. This use of Tradition, I have already observed in effect, is most just and important. The Fathers themselves are highly valuable in this respect. Whatever may be their theories, or their errors, they are unanswerable witnesses to the existence of the doctrines which they discuss and state. We may dispute the weight of their opinion respecting any particular doctrine. It may be said, that they were prejudiced in its favour,—that they rested it on wrong grounds. Still, it cannot be denied that they witness its *existence*. And if this be the case, a doctrine so attested demands our most serious attention, as to whether it be not really a doctrine of Scripture, and consequently a truth of God. This however is quite independent of their opinion as to the *value* of such testimony. They may overrate the importance of the like testimony received by them from their predecessors. But whilst we accept their testimony to the utmost, we are not bound at the same time to accept their estimate of its value. It happens, however that their opinion is not, as

it is often represented, adverse to the simple Protestant view of Tradition. That we may judge it rightly, we should consider the circumstances under which they advocate Tradition.

Can we be surprised to find Irenæus insisting so much as he does on the *sufficiency* of Tradition? when we remember the sort of persons against whom he wrote. The heresiarchs of Gnosticism, whom he is employed in controverting, set up for themselves a rival system of religion against the authority of the successors of the Apostles, as much as ever Mahomet did². Further, they so taught their peculiar systems, as to make Christianity, just as Mahomet also did, subordinate and instrumental to their own heresy. In their disputes accordingly with the Church, these heretics claimed an authority for themselves, equal at least to that which the members of the Church claimed for the Apostles. How were they to be answered then in argument? The authority of Scripture was not so much the matter of dispute here, though this was disputed also, as the authority of the teachers. It was justly urged, therefore, that those only possessed the truth who had received it by inheritance from Christ and the Apostles. The real tradition of doctrine would thus be put forward by Irenæus with peculiar stress and energy. And thus would he triumphantly declare, that the glorious martyr Polycarp, who had not only

² John of Damascus reckons Mahometanism among Christian heresies. De Hær. 101.

been placed by the Apostles themselves over the Church of Smyrna, but had been disciplined by Apostles, and had conversed with many who had seen Christ, was a witness of the Truth, far more worthy of credit and firm reliance than Valentinus and Marcion, and other men of perverse minds^a.

Another occasion which the Fathers had for insisting on the appeal to Tradition, was in the injurious treatment of Scripture, on the part of the heretics, by mutilation, or interpolation, or fanciful and perverse interpretation. The early heretics, further, had their own spurious gospels, to which they referred as of equal authority with the canonical books. If a passage was cited from Scripture, the heretic would reply, this is not in our sacred books. At another occasion, he would appeal to a passage which had been interpolated, and was not found in the canonical books, or to some unauthorized volume; or he would draw some fanciful interpretation out of the acknowledged text unknown to the Church in former days, and demand for it the same credit as for the most ancient and received truth. And then, in this last instance, the heretics, when confuted by Scripture, would recur to the appeal to Tradition, and maintain that their doctrines had been *secretly* conveyed down to them, and that they thus possessed a key to the interpretation of Scripture.

This state of things has been forcibly de-

^a Note IV.

picted both by Irenæus and Tertullian. They both argue that heretics were not to be admitted to enter on the appeal to Scripture; on the ground that the heretics could be "proved, without the Scriptures, to have nothing to do with the Scriptures." We may say to them, observes Tertullian, in a spirited passage, "Who are you? when and whence came you? what are you doing on my property, you that are not mine? what right have you, Marcion, to fell my wood? what license have you, Valentinus, for diverting my streams? what power have you, Apelles, to disturb my landmarks? The possession is mine. Why do the rest of you, at your will, sow and feed here? The possession is mine. I have been all along in possession of it; I have a prior possession of it; I have a firm title to it, from the very authors whose property it was. I am the heir of the Apostles. As they provided by their will, as they entrusted to my faith, as they solemnly gave under oath, so I hold. You, indeed, they have disinherited for ever, and abdicated, as strangers, as enemies. And whence are heretics strangers and enemies to the Apostles, except from the diversity of doctrine which each, at his own caprice, has either brought forward, or received, against the Apostles^b."

Thus then it is that Irenæus and Tertullian would rest the question between the heretics and the catholics of their day on the preliminary ground of Tradition; not that Tradition was to

^b De Præsc. Hær. c. 37.

be compared with Scripture as an authority of doctrine; but that the impugnors of Scripture, and usurpers of what they had no right to, should be met with a previous refutation of their pretensions, from the fact of an uniform Tradition of the same Truths existing in the Apostolic Churches, and no such Tradition existing among them.

But Tertullian, in particular, is explicit in denying that other doctrine, now so closely connected with the notion of Tradition,—the theory of a reservation of truths,—of a collection of sayings consigned, not to writing, but to the lips of the Apostles and their successors. He denies that the Apostles concealed any thing from the faithful, as the heretics pretended. “They will have it,” he says, “that the Apostles committed some things secretly, and to a few, because even Paul used this expression to Timothy—‘O Timothy, keep the deposit:’ and again, ‘Keep the good deposit.’”—(Observe, how these are the very texts on which advocates of Tradition take their chief stand.)—“What,” says Tertullian, “is this secret deposit, that it should be ascribed to another teaching? Did it belong to that charge, concerning which he says, ‘this charge I commend to thee, son Timothy;’ to that precept again, about which he says, ‘I charge thee, in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep the commandment.’ What then was

the commandment? what the charge? It will be understood from what is written both before and after; not that by this expression some covert allusion is made to a more remote doctrine, but it is rather inculcated, that *no other* should be admitted *beside that* which he had heard from himself, and, as I think, openly. ‘Before many witnesses,’ he says. Who these many witnesses were, if they will not understand by them the Church, matters not at all; since nothing could have been secret which was produced before many witnesses, &c.”^c

No testimony accordingly can be stronger than Tertullian’s, against the notion of Tradition being the channel of secret doctrine latent under the text of Scripture; whilst he sets forth the real importance of Tradition, in the simple sense of a continuous regular delivery of Christianity with its sacred documents. His treatise, *De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*, to which I have been chiefly referring, and to which we are commonly sent for proof of the *Authority* of Tradition, contains in reality an exposure of the unsoundness and evil of taking Tradition for an Authority, and representing Scripture as incapable of being understood or interpreted but by the light of Tradition. It is throughout an illustration to us, how such an assumed authority over the sacred text, serves only to introduce a subtle rationalism under the mask of primitive

^c De Præsc. Hær. c. 25. p. 407.

Christian teaching, and to obscure the undoubted universal tradition of the Gospel by a disputable partial tradition of the judgments and commandments of men.

A third reason why the Fathers insist on Tradition is, that they had to oppose the disputatiousness of Heretics, who charged the Catholic Christian with credulity, and professed for their part, on the contrary, to give "reasons" for every thing they should teach in the name of Religion. These Heretics would not allow that the word of the Christian teacher was a presumption in favour of what he taught; but required that his authority should be rejected altogether, and that attention should be given exclusively to them, and the "reasons" they should offer for their peculiar systems of doctrine,—reasons, ostensibly drawn out of Scripture, but in reality grounded on their own philosophies, and perversely applied to the interpretation of Scripture. For they put forward indeed the Scriptures as the ground of their doctrine. They had ever on their tongue—"Search the Scriptures"—"Seek and ye shall find." They boasted too of their knowledge and expertness of practice in the Scriptures: but it was not in order to obtaining *evidence* of the truth, that they searched and sought and handled the Scriptures. It was not for the instruction and support of Faith, but for mere knowledge,—for the *discovery* of Truth apart from all external information respecting it; ἐπηρεάζοντες τὰς γραφάς, as Irenæus pointedly charac-

terizes their proceeding^d. Against such a vain and unsanctified use of Scripture, combined with a rejection of all regular authority, the Fathers had to point out to the faithful, that the prescription was in favour of their own teachers, and the rule of faith delivered by those teachers; that they were not to search for “reasons” of the truth in Scripture, but simply for its evidence. In this sense Tertullian justly observes, citing our Lord’s words; “ ‘Thy faith,’ he says, ‘hath made the whole,’ not thy exercise in the Scriptures. Faith is placed in the Rule^e; thou hast the Law, and Salvation from observance of the Law. But exercise consists in curiosity; having glory only from the pursuit of skill. Let curiosity yield to faith. Let glory yield to Salvation^f. ” The meaning of the Fathers, who argue in this way for the use of Tradition, would be greatly mistaken if we should suppose they meant to exclude Scripture-evidence,—as if, when they exhorted to simple Faith, they recommended Faith in the *word alone* of the Christian teacher. It is clear they contend for faith without accompanying *reasons* explanatory of the matter believed, not faith without evidence; and denounce that hard and proud spirit, which pays no deference to the proper authorities in matters of religion, whether to Christian teachers as profes-

^d Con. Hær. l. c. 9. p. 43.

^e By a “Rule of Faith,” neither Irenæus nor Tertullian mean a criterion or ground of Doctrine, but the leading Articles of Faith.

^f De Præsc. Hær. c. 14. p. 403.

sors of Apostolic Doctrine, or to Scripture as the proper source and evidence of that Doctrine.

Then again, it should be observed, what sort of doctrine was taught by the Heretical leaders, against whom the Fathers, who are commonly cited as advocates for the authority of Tradition, are for the most part disputing. Was an audience in the Christian Church to be given to men who put evil for good, bitter for sweet, wrong for right, who exalted licentiousness into a law of purity, and who practically illustrated the profanation of their mysticism by the profligacy of their lives? Irenæus describes them, as holding the opinion that good conduct was necessary for the inferior believer, in order to salvation, but not for those who had perfect knowledge; that they would themselves be saved in every way, and by every means; that, as gold does not lose its beauty by being sunk in mud, so they, as being "spiritual," were incapable of corruption, in whatever sensualities they might be engaged. But they not only taught thus, he adds, but fearlessly did things of which the Scriptures affirm, that they who do them shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and he alleges acts of their profligacy^s. The testimony of Tertullian is to the same effect. He intimates the disorder and confusion that prevailed in the heretical communities; their mixture of things sacred and profane; their "conversation" as "vain" and "earthly"

^s Con. Hær. l. c. 6.

and “human,” “without gravity, without authority, without discipline;” the impurity of their theology, the corruption of morals which accompanied their preaching^h. It was not without good reason, then, that the Fathers refused to allow such teachers to appeal to Scripture, in proof of their abominations of doctrine. Wisely did they exhort the faithful, to adhere strictly and exclusively to the communion of the regular Apostolic Churches, and to follow that *prescription* of Truth which existed among these in their simple profession of no other doctrine than that originally delivered by the Apostles themselves.

A fifth ground on which the Fathers advocate the use of Tradition, is, the importunate demand, on the part of some of their contemporaries, for express Scripture-authority for every thing taught or done in the Church. There were persons in their days, who, like the Puritans of our own country, were jealous of admitting even matters of discipline or outward conduct, for which a warrant could not be produced from Scripture. Accordingly, when a Christian soldier was imprisoned for refusing to wear the laurel-chaplet in honour of the distribution of a donative from the Emperors, and afterwards suffered martyrdom for this conscientious public profession of his faith, Tertullian felt it necessary to justify the act, in consequence of scruples raised on the ground that no proof of the necessity of the

^h De Præsc. Hæc. c. 30. 41. 46. 51. &c.

refusal could be brought from Scripture. Such was the occasion of his treatise, *De Corona*. Here then he justly argues, that usage was a sufficient warrant for the refusal; that, though the practice was determined by no Scripture, custom had sanctioned it; which custom had doubtless flowed from Tradition. And he proceeds to give illustrations of several customs observed in the Church, and which had no other title to their reception but Tradition. Epiphanius observes, in like manner, that "it is proper also to use Tradition; for every thing cannot be taken from Divine Scripture, &c."¹ He is commenting on St. Paul's suggestions on the subject of marriage, in the first epistle to the Corinthians; in reference to which he points out that Scripture cannot be expected to answer every question that may be raised concerning it. He directs, accordingly, that, where difficulties arise in regard to the application of the sacred text, and which are not capable of being resolved by the text itself, the practice of the Christian Church may be regarded as a sufficient warrant for determining our judgment. In such an argument, we should naturally expect to find the authority of Tradition advanced; for here, in the silence of Scripture on the point in question, such authority, if anywhere, would justly have place. But the assertion of Tradition, under this point of view, gives no sanction to the notion in favour

¹ Adv. Hær. 61.

of which it has been alleged, of an authoritative source of doctrine distinct from Scripture^h.

Upon the whole, if the various statements of the Fathers on the subject, be duly examined, and tested by the occasions to which they refer, they will be found to amount to strong testimonies to the use of Tradition as an accessory to Scripture, but far from proofs of the existence of a body of doctrines, or of authoritative interpretations of Scripture, *supplementary* to Scripture, and of higher authority than Scripture, (as some represent it,) inasmuch as there is conceived to be no appeal beyond it from the sacred text.

The great intricacy, in fact, which belongs to the subject of Tradition is owing to the ambiguity of the term, and the facility, consequently, with which, in reasoning on the subject, men slide from one meaning of it in their premises to another in their conclusion. First it was employed in the simple sense of the act of delivering, without any notion of *succession* being involved in it; in which sense it appears to have been chiefly, if not entirely, used by the inspired writers. Thus the faith is spoken of by St. Jude, as "once for all delivered to the saints," τῇ ἀπαξ παραδοθείσῃ τοῖς ἁγίοις πλῶται,—the *one tradition* which was never to be repeated—never

^h Tertullian's words here do not even require that such Tradition should have *Apostolic* authority; for he says, *Salvo traditionis respectu, quocumque traditore censetur: nec auctorem respicias, sed auctoritatem, et in primis consuetudinis ipsius.* De Cor. c. 4. p. 119.

to be delivered again. And thus again St. Paul declared that he had delivered to the Corinthians the institution of the Eucharist, which he had not received by any succession of teachers, but immediately from the Lord¹. This then would be the primary sense of the term: and it would evidently apply in this sense to any matter whatever,—to institutions, and rites, and ceremonies, as well as to doctrines,—to the volumes of Scripture itself, as well as to the personal oral teaching of the Apostles. The next stage of its meaning involves the notion of succession: and here a most material difference in the use of the term is introduced. For here it applies more properly to unwritten doctrines and institutions. For the Scriptures, being once delivered, are a standing fixed document; and cannot be said to be *perpetuated* by being delivered down. They are perpetuated by their simple existence from the first, and not by virtue of their *transmission* from hand to hand. But oral teachings, and institutions, and rites, exist only as they are perpetuated

¹ So the term is used, after St. Paul, by Justin Martyr in his Second Apology, in referring to the Eucharist, p. 98: and by Tertullian: Quod apud multos unum invenitur, non est erratum, sed traditum. Audeat ergo aliquis dicere illos errasse qui tradiderunt? *De Præsc. Her.* c. 28. He is speaking of the preaching of the Holy Spirit by the Apostles.—Plato makes the like use of the term. He employs it in conjunction with *διδασκαλία* and *νόμος*. Speaking of certain regulations which he would enforce in a state, he says, *παράδοσιον ἐν τε τῷ νόμῳ καὶ λόγῳ τούτων δὲ αὐτῶν διδασκαλία καὶ παράδοσις λεγέσθω*. *De Leg.* vii. p. 351. ed. Bip.

by transmission. This sense, then, the term Tradition would acquire, when, in the lapse of time, the first preachers and teachers of the Gospel had disappeared from the world, and others carried on the delivery of what had been received from them. But the term being now more appropriate to oral teachings and institutions, though not perhaps at once restricted to these, would, in another stage, become the representative of a body of doctrines and rites so transmitted; and Tradition would soon be used in contradistinction to Scripture, in like manner as from the original use of Doctrine to denote *teaching*, we now apply the term to denote *the matter taught*. And hence, last of all, the transition was easy from Tradition, now considered as a distinct class of things belonging to Religion, to Traditions in the *plural*, to denote the several particulars falling under this head.

In the Church of Rome we witness the mature growth of a system, corresponding with this progressive meaning of the term. We find there, accordingly, a twofold word of God,—the word written, and the word unwritten,—and both regarded as equally authentic, equally binding on the affection and reverence of the believer.

The transition was not all at once to this system. Unwritten doctrines gradually arose and incorporated themselves with the scheme of the Gospel. And a method was required, which should at once combine the corruptions of the

Faith into a regular system, and form the apology for it. Tradition, thus originating in a right principle—a due regard to every bequest of Apostolic teaching, and Apostolic institution—degenerated into a self-constituted organ of divine truth.

We may take warning from the history of the case in the Church of Rome, how we outstep the soberness and modesty of our Church, in our veneration of Antiquity, and our zeal for the maintenance of the Apostolical, rather than the Scriptural, character of our Church. Doubtless, we are quite right in this veneration, and this zeal. But, for that very reason, we should watch more strictly the tendency in our nature to carry them to the extreme; and especially in such a case as that of our own Church, where we justly feel that we can throw ourselves with perfect confidence on the testimony of the purest ages of the Gospel, and cite the primitive confessors and martyrs as our own fathers in the Faith. We must remember, above all, in the midst of these our just claims to Apostolic descent, that we are a living Church only as we hold to the foundation,—as we are built up, a spiritual house on Jesus Christ; as living stones, fitly framed and joined together in Him by the Spirit. It will not avail us, that we are followers of Paul or Cephas, bright as their example is of Christian faith and Christian holiness:—but it is, because we are of Christ, because we look to

Him crucified, and trust in His name only, that we have hope of eternal life.

If any man profited in the school of Human Interpretation and Traditive Comment, it was St. Paul. But though he had thence profited above all in the Jews' Religion, and was learned in all the wisdom of their doctors and scribes,—by that traditional religion and that mystic wisdom, he knew not God, and accounted himself foolish, that he might receive the truth, as it is in Jesus, in simplicity of faith and love. He would not have us place the disciple above the master, by such a deference to Apostolic names and Apostolic teachings, as throws into the shade the supremacy of the authority of the Bible. “Be followers of me,” he says indeed, but he immediately subjoins, “even as I am of Christ.” Only remember, too, with what earnestness he asks his Corinthian sons in the Faith, “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” He would have a Christian Church walk after the example of the Apostles; but he would have them know, that there is but one great example of Life and Doctrine proposed to all,—that no man's name or authority must be set up to the Christian as the ground of his confidence,—as his oracle of faith,—but only the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; even as our Lord himself said, “Call no man your Father upon the earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven;” neither be ye called

Masters, for one is your Master, even Christ^k.' But where does Christ speak to us with His own voice,—where does the Holy Spirit Himself shew us the things of Christ, but in the lively oracles of Scripture? The words which Christ speaks to us there, they are spirit, and they are life; and by them, whether as a Church or as individuals, we shall be judged in the last day.

^k Matt. xxiii. 9.

NOTE I. p. 5.

“ Nor is it without some degree of inconsistency, that we see the members of the Protestant Church conceding, in this subject, the use and authority of a principle, which it has been the business of the Reformation to reduce to its proper place; the use and authority of *Tradition*, in conveying articles of supernatural doctrine not committed to Scripture. For all that is commonly asserted of those primary revelations concerning the mystery of our Redemption, as having been given to the First Ages, and conveyed down, in succession, to the Following Ages of the Ancient Church, is an admission, that great truths, beyond the record of Holy Writ, truths of pure and authoritative revelation, were entrusted to that extraneous channel of conveyance: and that there existed a *second*, a *collateral Canon*, of Unwritten Doctrine. An admission, which seems not more derogatory to the Scripture, than inconsistent with the main maxim of our Protestant Belief. Before the rise of the Written Scripture, Tradition, of necessity, was the record of Faith. But since those primary revelations, not now extant in Holy Writ, are said to have been transmitted to the Following Ages for their instruction, after the Mosaic Scripture was given, there still would be the flaw and opprobrium of an Unwritten Faith in the Ancient Church of Israel; and that which we disclaim for our own Church we ought not to impute to theirs. So long as we pretend, that they divided their faith between Scripture and Tradition, we give the Romanist the Mosaic Church on his side: a concession which involves no immaterial part of the *principle* in debate between us and the

Romanist. And although the doctrines, thus ascribed to the Mosaic Church, may be such as are found contained in the *later* Scripture, that is no defence of the ascription of them to the earlier age. For the question is not, whether the doctrines in themselves be true, but whether the Ancient Church had the faith of them: of which we make an unknown and unrecorded tradition the witness. These are things which require a serious revision.”—DAVISON’S *Inquiry into the Origin and Intent of Primitive Sacrifice*, pp. 158-160.

NOTE II. p. 20.

“Scripture teacheth us that saving truth which God hath discovered unto the world by Revelation; and it presumeth us taught otherwise, that itself is divine and sacred. The question then being, by what means we are taught this? some answer, that to learn it, we have no other way than only tradition; as namely, that so we believe, because both we from our predecessors, and they from theirs, have so received. But is this enough? That which all men’s experience teacheth them, may not in any wise be denied. And by experience we all know, that the first outward motive leading men so to esteem of the Scripture, is the authority of God’s Church. For when we know the whole Church of God hath that opinion of the Scripture, we judge it even at the first an impudent thing for any man, bred and brought up in the Church, to be of a contrary mind without cause. Afterwards, the more we bestow our labour in reading or hearing the mysteries thereof, the more we find that the thing itself doth answer our received opinion concerning it. So that the former inducement prevailing somewhat with us before, doth now much more prevail, when the very thing hath mi-

nistered further reason. If infidels or atheists chance at any time to call it in question, this giveth us occasion to sift what reason there is, whereby the testimony of the Church concerning Scripture, and our own persuasion which Scripture itself hath confirmed, may be proved a truth infallible," &c.—HOOKER, *Ecc. Pol.* Book III. Vol. I. pp. 387, 388, ed. 1807.

NOTE III. p. 34.

"I would know, by some special instance, what one article of Christian Faith, or what duty required necessarily unto all men's salvation, there is, which the very reading of the Word of God is not apt to notify. Effects are miraculous and strange when they grow by unlikely means. But did we ever hear it accounted for a wonder, that he which doth read should believe and live according to the will of Almighty God? Reading doth convey to the mind that truth without addition or diminution, which Scripture hath derived from the Holy Ghost. And the end of all Scripture is the same which St. John proposeth in the writing of that most divine Gospel, namely, Faith, and through Faith Salvation. Yea, all Scripture is to this effect in itself available, as they which wrote it were persuaded; unless we suppose, that the Evangelists, or others, in speaking of their own intent to instruct and to save by writing, had a secret conceit which they never opened to any, a conceit that no man in the world should ever be that way the better for any sentence by them written, till such time as the same might chance to be preached upon, or alleged at the least in a sermon. Otherwise, if he which writeth doth that which is forcible in itself, how should he which readeth be

thought to do that which in itself is of no force to work belief, and to save believers? * * * * * They tell us, the profit of reading is singular, in that it serveth for a preparative unto sermons; it helpeth prettily towards the nourishment of Faith, which sermons have once engendered; it is some stay to his mind which readeth the Scripture, when he findeth the same things there which are taught in sermons, and thereby perceiveth how God doth concur in opinion with the preacher; besides, it keepeth sermons in memory, and doth in that respect, although not feed the soul of man, yet help the retentive force of that stomach of the mind which receiveth ghostly food at the preacher's hands. But the principal cause of writing the Gospel was, that it might be preached upon or interpreted by public ministers apt and authorized thereunto. Is it credible that a superstitious conceit (for it is no better) concerning sermons, should in such sort both darken their eyes, and yet sharpen their wits withal, that the only true and weighty cause why Scripture was written, the cause which in Scripture is so often mentioned, the cause which all men have ever till this present day acknowledged, this they should clean exclude, as being no cause at all, and load us with so great store of strange concealed causes, which did never see light till now? In which number the rest must needs be of moment, when the very chiefest cause of committing the sacred Word of God unto books, is surmised to have been, lest the teacher should want a text whereupon to scholy. * * * * * If we allege what the Scriptures themselves do usually speak for the saving force of the Word of God, not with restraint to any one certain kind of delivery, but howsoever the same shall chance to be made known, yet by one trick or other they always restrain it unto sermons. Our Lord and Saviour hath said, *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think to have eternal life.*

But they tell us he spake to the Jews, which Jews before had heard his sermons; and that peradventure it was his mind they should search, not by reading nor by hearing them read, but by attending whensoever the Scriptures should happen to be alleged in sermons. Furthermore, having received Apostolical doctrine, the Apostle St. Paul hath taught us to esteem the same as the supreme rule whereby all other doctrines must for ever be examined. Yea, but in as much as the Apostle doth here speak of that he had preached, he flatly maketh (as they strangely affirm) his preachings or sermons the rule whereby to examine all. And then, I beseech you, what rule have we whereby to judge or examine any? For if sermons must be our rule, because the Apostles' sermons were so to their hearers; then, sith we are not as they were, hearers of the Apostles' sermons, it resteth that either the sermons which we hear should be our rule, or (that being absurd) there will (which yet hath greater absurdity) no rule at all be remaining for trial what doctrines now are corrupt, what consonant with heavenly truth. Again, let the same Apostle acknowledge all Scripture profitable to teach, to improve, to correct, to instruct in righteousness; still notwithstanding we err, if hereby we presume to gather, that Scripture read will avail unto any one of all these uses: they teach us the meaning of the words to be, that so much the Scripture can do, if the minister that way apply it in his sermons, otherwise not. Finally they never hear a sentence which mentioneth the Word or Scripture, but forthwith their glosses upon it are, the Word preached, the Scripture explained or delivered unto us in sermons."—HOOKER, *Ecc. Pol.* Book V. Vvol. II. pp. 82-89.

NOTE IV. p. 40.

"Non enim per literas traditam illam, says Irenæus, was their vain pretence, sed per vivam vocem: ob quam causam et Paulum dixisse: "Sapientiam autem loquimur inter perfectos: sapientiam autem non mundi hujus." (1 Cor. ii. 6.) Et hanc sapientiam unusquisque eorum esse dicit, quam a semetipso adinvenerit, fictionem videlicet, ut digne secundum eos sit veritas, aliquando quidem in Valentino, aliquando autem in Marcione, aliquando in Cerintho: postea deinde in Basilide fuit, aut in illo qui contra disputat, qui nihil salutare loqui potuit. Unusquisque enim ipsorum omnimodo perversus, semetipsum, regulam veritatis depravans, prædicare non confunditur."—IREN. *Con. Hær.* l. 3. c. 2. p. 174.

